

Charcot Foot

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Charcot foot is the presence of injured bones or joints in your foot that can lead to foot deformity. It is a complication of peripheral neuropathy.

Peripheral neuropathy is a disease that damages nerves in your hands and feet, often causing a loss of feeling.

If you have diabetes, you are more likely to develop Charcot foot than people who do not have diabetes.

Peripheral neuropathy may prevent you from feeling any pain if you break or fracture bones or damage joints. If you keep walking on your injured foot, the bones may not heal correctly, resulting in a deformed foot.

Early detection and treatment of Charcot foot will help prevent further deformity.

Signs of Charcot Foot

You may not have any pain with Charcot foot, but there are other signs to watch for:

- swelling
- warm skin
- redness.

If you notice any of these signs on your foot, contact your health care provider right away. Swelling, warmth and redness are also common signs of infection, so your health care provider may order X-rays to help diagnose your foot problem.

Treating Charcot Foot

Your health care provider will treat Charcot foot by prescribing:

- no weight bearing on the affected foot, often for 3 to 6 months. This will allow your foot to heal. It is important to follow your health care provider's advice about not putting any weight on your Charcot foot, even if it feels fine.
- special devices to help you keep weight off your foot. You may be using a walking cast, brace, crutches or other aids while your foot heals.
- special footwear. Custom-made shoes or inserts will fit the new shape of your foot. They may help prevent sores (ulcers) on your foot caused by footwear that doesn't fit properly.
- surgery to correct the deformity. This normally happens only when foot sores keep recurring. If sores don't heal, they can lead to infection, gangrene (dead tissue) or amputation.

Preventing Complications From Charcot Foot

If you develop Charcot foot, your foot bones will not go back to their original shape, even after treatment. Treatment will help prevent your foot from getting worse.

If left untreated, Charcot foot can lead to open sores (ulcers). Foot ulcers can lead to major infections or amputation in severe cases.

Your foot will need careful, lifelong attention to help prevent more damage to it. Your health care provider may recommend that you:

- always use any custom-fit footwear or inserts you have
- check your feet every day
- see a foot care specialist on a regular basis.